

REPORT OF THE INDIAN PEACE COMMISSION  
To the President of the United States:

The undersigned, Commissioners appointed

under the Act of Congress, approved July 20, 1867, "to establish peace with certain hostile Indian tribes," were authorized by said act to call together the chiefs and

*First:* To remove, if possible, the causes of war.  
*Second:* To secure as far as practicable our frontier settlements, and the safe building of the railroad looking to the Pacific.  
*Third:* To suggest or inaugurate some plan for the

Congress, in the passage of the law, seemed to indicate the policy of collecting, at some early day, all the Indians east of the Rocky Mountains on one or more reservations, and with that view it was made our duty to examine the country, and report on the best place for the collection of the Indians in that area to receive all the Indian tribes occupying territory east of the said mountains not now peacefully residing on permanent reservations under treaty stipulations. It was our duty to report on the best place to which could be assigned sufficient arable or grazing lands to enable the tribes placed on them to support themselves, and that the place should be accessible to the Indian population of the highways of travel and the contemplated railroads to the Pacific Ocean. The subsequent action and approval of Congress will be necessary, these being the objects of the law, and we are not selected for the purposes of exclusive Indian settlement.

When the act was passed war was being openly waged between the Indian tribes and great diversity of opinion existed among the officials of the Government, and no less diversity among our people, as to the means best adapted to bring about peace and amity between the two would succeed, while others had no hope of peace with the Indians were thoroughly subdued by force of arms, and the Government had no sentiment so strongly prevailing, as well as to meet the possible contingency of failure by the Commission, it was, perhaps, wisely provided that the Commission should be authorized to employ such force as they might deem necessary to carry out their duty, or should the Indians fail to comply with the stipulations they might make for going on their reservations, the President might call out the military force of the United States to compel the Indians to occupy the desired place.

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with earnestness and determination; he goes on and on, without a moment's respite, until he has secured a triumph of vengeance, and then he turns to his victim with all his wrongs have to be redressed by him. In our intercourse with him we have failed in a large measure to provide peaceful means for the satisfaction of his passions, and he has been obliged to wage war with some pertinacity, and, indeed, in the same spirit, with which a party litigant, in full confidence of the right, proceeds to the trial of a cause, and, if he is not successful, he appeals to a higher tribunal, and finally, if he is not successful there, he resorts to force, and yields nothing, he never surrenders, and is the more excusable therefore, in that he has been deceived, and has been deceived in a way that he does not ask or expect mercy. He is then the more consistent that he does not grant mercy. So little is he accustomed to kindness from others, it may not be surprising that he should be so little disposed to show it to himself, and yet conscious of the contempt of the white man, who suddenly aroused by some new wrong, the remembrance of old ones still stinging, exclaims, "I am blind with rage." If he fails to see the olive branch or flag of truce in the hands of the peace commissioner, and in savage ferocity adds on to the existing state of hostility, he is not alone, for in a half century he has been driven back from civilization, where his passions might have been subjected to the influence of education and softened by the influence of the white man.

This difficulty, meeting us at the very threshold of our duties, had to be overcome before anything of a practical character could be accomplished. Fortunately we had recourse to the commission a combination of the staff and midshipmen were sent to the various posts and districts and efficient operations. Through the orders of Lieut. Gen. Sherman, the commanders of posts and those of Commissioners, Mr. Taylor to superintendents and agents under his charge in the proper districts, a perfect concert of action was maintained, and, according to the instructions of the commission, the most efficient results were obtained. We were directed them at Fort Laramie on the 13th day of September.

and those then south of the Arkansas, including the Cheyennes, the Kiowas, Comanches, Arapahoes, and Apaches, that we would meet them for consultation at some point near Fort Larned, on or about the 15th day of October.

Wallow runners were being employed and sent out to notify them of our pacific intentions, and our desire to meet them at the times and places stated, the Commission resolved to occupy the time intervening before their first meeting in examining the country on the Upper Missouri River. The steamer St. Johns was chartered, and such goods purchased as were thought suitable as presents to the Indians.

On the 13th of August we met at Fort Leavenworth, and took the statement of Major John Hancock, George A. Paul, and others. After we had met at Fort Leavenworth, we proceeded to Omaha, Nebraska, and took the statement of Major John Augur and others. At Yankton we met George Paulk of Dakota, and took his evidence on subjects embraced in our duties. George Paulk, at our request, accompanied us to the mouth of the river, and was present at the subsequent interviews with the Indians of his superintendency.

Owing to the low stage of water, our progress up the river was much retarded, and we failed to reach Fort Union before the water had fallen. At a point about twelve miles above the mouth of the Big Cheyenne River we reached, when it was found necessary to turn back, in order to fill on several engagements made with the Indians on the river as we went up, and then reached Fort Union.

On the return trip councils were held with various bands of the Sioux or Dakota Indians at Forts Sully and Thompson, and also at Yankton, Ponce, and Santa Rosa Reservations, full reports of which will be found in the appendix. Although these Indians along the Missouri River are not hostile, and do not therefore legitimately come within the scope of duties assigned to us, yet it was thought quite important, in determining whether the country was fit for Indian habitation, to examine into the condition of those now there, and especially those endeavoring to live by agriculture.

The time given us was too short to make anything like a personal inspection of so large a district of unimproved land.

We took evidence of those who had traversed this region in reference to the soil, climate, and productions, which evidence will be found in the appendix. To this subject we shall again allude when we come to speak of the tribes.

In this connection, however, before returning to the thread of our narrative, it is our duty to remark that the condition of those tribes demands prompt and serious action. The treaty stipulations with many of them are altogether unworkable. They seem to have been made in total ignorance of their numbers and disposition, and in utter disregard of their wants. Some of the agents now among them should be removed and men appointed who by honesty, fair dealing, and unselfish devotion to duty, secure their respect and confidence. Where the present treaties fail to designate a particular place as a home for the tribe, they should be changed.

Returning to Omand on the 11th of September the steamer was discharged and we immediately proceeded to the mouth of the river. On the 12th of September we found a considerable number of the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes, some of whom had been friendly, while others had but recently been engaged in war. A council was held with them, which at one time threatened to result in no good, but finally a full and perfect understanding was arrived at, which, though not then even yet reduced to writing, we have every reason to believe has been faithfully kept by them.

It was at this council that the hitherto untried policy in connection with Indians of endeavoring to conquer by

kindness was magnanimous. The friend of the whites, had intended himself to induce the hostile bands to come into this council, and had promised them, if peace were made, that that ammunition should be given them to kill game for the winter. This promise was not authorized by the Commissioners, but we were assured that it had been made not only by him, but by others of our runners, and that nothing less would have brought them in. These Indians are very poor and needy. The game in this section is fast disappearing, and the bow and arrow are scarcely sufficient to furnish them food. We gave them some flour, and a few dollars, and they gave him some tobacco. He refused in his ignorant, dumb mind to starve, and

more than this, he looks upon the refusal, especially after a profession of friendship on his part, as an imputation upon his truthfulness and fidelity. If an Indian is to be trusted at all, he must be trusted to the full extent of his word. If you betray symptoms of distrust, he discovers it with nature's intuition, and at once condemns their falsehood that would blend friendship and suspicion together. Whatever our people may choose to say of the insincerity or duplicity of the Indian, it would fail to express the estimate entertained by many Indians of the

While much of the character in this respect is shared by all, we have been more often spoken by those who have been the usual ones to come in contact with the long-pled its work, deaf to their cries of suffering; and heartless cruelty has so frequently sought them in the garb of charity, that to obtain their confidence our promises must be scrupulously fulfilled, and our professions of friendship divested of all appearance of selfishness and duplicity.

We are now satisfied, whatever the criticisms on our conduct at the time, and they were very severe both by the ignorant and corrupt, that had we refused the ammunition

nition demanded at this council, the war on their part would have continued, and possibly ere this have resulted in great loss of life and property. As it is, they at once proceeded to their Fall hunt on the Republican River, where they killed game enough to sustain themselves for a large part of the Winter, and no act of hostility or wrong has been perpetrated by them since.

The statement of this fact, if it proves nothing else, may serve to indicate that the Indian, though barbarous, is yet a man, susceptible to those feelings which ordinarily respond to the exercises of magnanimity and kindness. If it should suggest to civilization that the injunction,